

Message from the Chief April 22, 2011

Dear Tempe Police Employees,

This past Tuesday we held a 4 hour 'Use of Force' Training Academy at the Hardy Police Substation for members of the media.

Representatives from 3, 5, 10, 12, 15, 33 and the Arizona Republic participated actively in the course, which paralleled the same training our Police Officers undergo. The goal was to give a hands-on experience in the dynamic situations that our officers face in training and on the street, as they work to protect the members of our community. The course included lecture on the law, decision-making under stress, video simulations, and tactical scenarios.

I commend the outstanding teamwork demonstrated by the Training Unit and the Media Relations Unit. Achieving such a successful outcome does not come by accident; it took diligent effort and planning to achieve such positive results, and the project was executed with enthusiasm by all those involved. The curriculum was designed by Sergeants Mike Pierce and John Avalos, who also taught the class, along with Officers Darin Mowery, Rich Monteton and Lt. Mike Horn. Sergeant Steve Carbajal and Molly Enright did a great job coordinating – the relationships that our PIOs have fostered with the media are so important in relating the challenges our employees face on a daily basis, and in building trust with our community.

Today's Arizona Republic featured an excellent story. The text is pasted below for your consideration, as well as links to that and other media coverage, including some exciting video of all the action.

Thanks for all you do and stay safe!

Sincerely,

Tom

http://www.azcentral.com/community/tempe/articles/2011/04/21/20110421tempe-training-scenarios-bring-police-decisions-into-focus.html#ixzz1KGc9aj3v

http://www.azfamily.com/video/?id=120248159&sec=528732

http://www.abc15.com/dpp/news/region southeast valley/tempe/tempe-police-give-abc15-hands-on-look-at-deadly-force-decision-making

<u>Training scenarios bring police decisions into focus</u>

by Weldon B. Johnson - Apr. 21, 2011 11:21 AM The Arizona Republic

I'm cautious as I approach the guy who's been described to me as a "disturbed man talking nonsense."

I tell him I'd like to talk to him and he tells me he's working undercover. He hands me a phony business card with the handwritten words "I'm under cover." He hands me a paper badge and reaches into his briefcase, takes out some candy and offers me some.

He just seems kind of silly until he reached into the case again, pulls out a gun and shoots me in the stomach. The paint capsule that hit me stung a little, but I was more stunned at what happened than hurt.

Tempe police training Officer Rich Monteton reminded me that I would have been wearing body armor if this were a real scenario and told me I wasn't finished. So I fired my pistol three times, striking the "disturbed man talking nonsense" in the chest.

Fortunately for everyone involved, I was just taking part in an exercise at a Tempe Police Department training facility. I was part of a group of reporters there to experience a small portion of the training department personnel go through concerning the use of force.

The purpose of this exercise was to educate the media, and hopefully, the public on the difficulty police face in having to decide whether to use force.

"Officers have to make split-second decisions that are often second-guessed for months and years after that," Tempe police Sgt. Steve Carbajal said. "When people see something on television or read about it, there's more to it than you see at first glance."

Our day started with a presentation by Sgt. Mike Pierce who went over some of the department's policies concerning the use of force. That was followed by a brief introduction to the type of firearms used by the department by Sgt. John Avalos.

Lt. Mike Horn then introduced a video presentation, complete with recordings of the actual radio exchanges, of the July 2000 gunfight in which Tempe Officer Wesley Scott Tipton was shot three times before fatally wounding his attacker. That video is shown to the department's officers each year on the anniversary of that incident as a reminder of the types of situations they can face.

Our group was then put in situations, using computer simulations and live-action scenarios, where we had to decide what level of force, if any, was warranted. The computer simulations seemed a lot like a video game.

The first involved a domestic-violence situation where I wound up shooting a man who fired at me after pushing a woman out of the way.

The second scenario involved responding to a burglar-alarm call at a business. A man with a gun ran out of the business but he complied with my commands to stop, didn't try to face me and dropped his weapon so I didn't shoot.

In the third scene, a gunman in a room uses two people as shields to block the door. He shoots one of his hostages and I shot him when I had a chance.

The live scenarios were even more vivid as all three bad guys were played convincingly by Officer Darrin Mowery.

In addition to the "disturbed man talking nonsense," I encountered a potential car thief (I shot him when he charged me with a knife) and a man who had violated a restraining order and was threatening to shoot a coworker.

The third scenario was especially intense as it involved some physical exertion before I even encountered the real trouble. After hitting a punching bag meant to be the suspect and yelling for about a minute, I followed the suspect from bright sunlight into a dimly lit room.

I was wiping sweat from my eye and trying unsuccessfully to draw my pistol while yelling at Mowery to drop his weapon. After what seemed like an eternity, he turned and shot at me just as I got my weapon out of its holster. I was able to shoot him once before my gun jammed and the incident ended.

Even though no real lives were at stake, I questioned some of my choices later.

For example, when Mowery was portraying the potential car thief he told me initially it was his brother's car. I asked him for identification, and then drew my weapon when he reached into his back pocket for a wallet, which he threw at me. Our interaction went downhill from there.

I know police officers have a hard job and have never been totally unsympathetic to the dilemmas they sometimes face. One of my brothers was in law enforcement having recently retired after serving as a sheriff's deputy in Michigan's Wayne County (Detroit).

By the same token, I've often been skeptical when I heard about police shootings or other uses of force that seemed to be excessive. I've witnessed scenes in real life similar to my encounter with the "disturbed man" and wondered why police were making such a big deal out of what looked like just a nuisance to me as a bystander.

But getting a small taste of what it's like to face those situations reminds me not to be so quick to reach a conclusion. Our exercise in decision-making was nothing compared to the weight of the choices real law-enforcement officers have to make on a routine basis.

The choices they make can mean the difference between life and death for the officers or the people they encounter.